

their cud and have cloven hoofs. With the exception of the deer, all wild animals are on the prohibited list.

The "Shokhet" (slaughterer) must be a learned and upright man who knows the Law of Kashruth. The "Khalif" (slaughtering blade) must be sharp, so that only one slash will kill the animal. If the blade is moved back and forth, which would indicate that the animal suffered, the meat becomes Treif. The lungs and the entire inside must be carefully inspected. If any spot or boil is found, it may become Treif. This inspection is conducted on fowl too. In animals, all blood-carrying veins must be removed, as well as the ligaments.

Before cooking, all meat must be soaked for a half hour, salted thoroughly for a whole hour and then thoroughly soaked and rinsed three times. Liver may not be fried, but must be grilled, because frying closes the pores and thus seals the blood within. Even an egg which has a blood fleck becomes Treif.

In view of all of the above, it seems ridiculous to claim that Jews used human blood for Matsoth baking, which accusation caused the Jews to suffer centuries of slaughter at the hands of people who use blood for cooking in many forms (puddings, sausages and soups—Czarnina).

The first blood accusations were created in England, Norwich, 1144, when a four year old child was found slain on Good Friday. Since it coincided with the Jewish Passover, then the only reason for a Christian Child's death must have been the need of his blood for their Matso baking. However, no one was put on trial, but this was the beginning which spread to Europe and which eventually led to dreadful results. The first one with bloody results took place in Blois, France, when a horse taken to the Loire river refused to drink. And why should a horse refuse to drink water in May? There must have been somewhere a Christian child floating which only a horses sense could detect, and the child must have been one Jews have slain to extract blood for Matsoth. Neither a slain child nor body were found but all the Jews of Blois were burned to death at the stake. All early blood accusations took place in England (Norwich, 1144, Gloucester, 1168, Bury St. Edmund, 1181, Bristol 1181, etc.), from there, France and Germany took over and they became annual events. Each year as Passover approached it was met by the Jews with dread. During the last centuries these accusations were taken over and given prominence by Greece, Poland, Yugoslavia, Ukraina, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Russia and Germany. The most famous "last" one took place in Kiev, Ukraina (1911-1913), (Beilis), about a dozen took place during 1929, the very last accusation in 1940 in Czechia. The only European countries who were free of this annual blood libel were, Ireland, Holland and the Scandinavian lands. It has cost the Jews thousands upon thousands of massacred lives; property destruction in the billions and maimed physically and mentally people in the millions.

Even in the United States this insane libel appeared in Massena, N. Y., during 1928, when a Christian child was lost before the Yom Kippur (Day of Attonement) holidays, when Jews fast, not feast. The rabbi was quizzed. The child was found unharmed wandering in the woods.

**BRITH MILLAH - COVENANT OF THE CIRCUMCISION**

The act of circumcision is a Covenant between Israel and God and it was instituted during the Biblical age with Abraham. In Genesis 17: 10-12, it reads: "This is my Covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised... And in the eighth day the flesh of his forskin shall be circumcised."

During the birth itself there are no special ceremonies. The Sefardim, when they lived in Spain, were wont to



Pages from Reuchlin's notation of the cantillation (Haf-tarah) used for chanting in the Synagogues, printed in Germany in 1518. John Reuchlin of Cologne (Koeln) was a highly cultured German and greatly respected by all. He knew many languages, including Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He was the first Christian to write a Hebrew Grammar and the first one to notate down the recitational cantillation in "modern" notes. He was appointed as one of censors of Hebrew books whose duty was to try to find in them anti-Christian sentiment and condemn them to burning, particularly within the Talmud (1509). John Reuchlin could find nothing controrvesial, but, instead, he wrote a very favorable opinion on the Jewish writing, which naturally did not please the opponents.

place kernels and gold coins in a child's first bath to imply that he might have plenty of food and prosperity during his life. The naming of a boy takes place during the circumcision while girls are named at any time soon after birth.

The God of Israel, the Law Giver Moses and the Talmud Rabbis all combined forces to keep the Jewish people alive and educated. Circumcision, the Dietary Laws and the various forced sanitations combined with religion all led toward that end. Now, circumcision is recognized as a great health value and in modern hospitals boys are circumcised regardless whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In the present day and age the dietary laws may be outmoded and burdensome but they were of untold aid in the ages past. Orthodox Jews are precept bound (as one of their absolute duties) to wash hands at nearly every turn they make, and say prayers with each washing; upon rising, after voiding or stool, before eating and after eating. Now days many do that but in the not long past Jews only observed such forms of religious sanitation. Women's menstrual periods and births are likewise followed with many immersions and abstainings. And cleanliness IS Godliness. And because of this cleanliness, the Jews, tho, forced into crowded ghettos, were always able to resist plagues which caused havoc among their Gentile neighbors in the past dark ages when sanitation among them was something unheard off. It not always paid off. When the famous Black Plague struck Europe, from 1347 to 1350, millions of Europeans died like flies while but a handful of Jews were affected, this aroused a great suspicion. To their mode of thinking the only reason why so many Christians died was because the Jews poisoned the air and waters with a concoction of ground spiders and other formulae. That the Jews drank the same waters and breathed the same air never occured to them, or how the Jews could poison the air of all of Europe that they didn't bother to explain either. Their answer was a horrible slaughter of Jews, with the worst massacres taking place

in France and Germany. In Germany alone 300 communities were completely annihilated. Poland, which had the smallest amount of Jews slain in revonge of the Black Death, had a mere 10,000 massacred victims.

**BAR MITSVAH - CONFIRMATION.**



Expounding portions of the Torah during his Bar Mitzvah by last century's artist, M. Oppenheim, in Germany. (Foto by Frank Darmstaedter, of the New York Jewish Museum).

Next in importance to circumcision is the Bar Mitzvah which takes place on the Sabbath nearest to a boy's thirteenth birthday. For this great occasion the boys are trained to recite (in cantillation) the portion of the Law which they chant at the synagogue; and for the first time they wear the "Talith," a fringed prayer cloth; they also begin to use the "Tefilim" for morning prayers. From that day on, the boy becomes a "Bar Mitzvah," the "Son, duty bound to perform precepts," and he alone must share the responsibilities committed to God and man. Until this time, God holds the father responsible for the son.

A Bar Mitzvah in the United States assumes the importance of wedding proportions, with banquets and much ceremony at the synagogue hall. After the services and celebration in the synagogue hall, another celebration is usually held that night in a hall.

The Reform Jews observe mass confirmations during the Shavu'oth Festivals for both boys and girls and follow a style of Christian confirmations.

**WEDDINGS**

Until the beginnig of the twentieth century, the selection of a bride or groom in eastern Europe was entirely in the hands of the parents and marriage brokers (who were called "Shadkhanim") or Shadkhan. Seldom did the couple involved see each other before they were led to the Khupa where the marriage took place. The Shadkhan played an important part, for which service he was remunerated. Dowery (Nadan) and family background (Yikhuss) were the prerequisites to a marriage.

The wedding day was approached with great seriousness, solemnity and much preparation. During the Saturday preceding the wedding, the groom is called upon "Aliyah" to cantillate the allotted portion of the Bible at the synagogue; while the bride, during the prenuptial eve or day, undergoes ritualistic immersions of three dips ("Mikvah"). The nuptials take place in the evening, and the day preceding the marriage is spent in fasting and meditation, unless it is the first day of the month, in which case the fasting is suspended.

The marriage ceremony takes place in the synagogue's court (or in a hall) under the Khupa. The groom wears a kittel to remind him of the day of death and the destruc-

tion of the Temple in 70 C. E. As the couple stand under the Khupa, the bride is led around the groom seven times. The ceremony consists of prayers, which are mostly chanted; the sanctification, the ring ritual, reading of the marriage contract, drinking of the wine by the bride and groom and the shattering of the wine goblet by the groom, which is followed with the exclamations of "Mazal Tov" (Good Luck). The Sefardim say "Siman Tov" (A Good Omen). Previously, the custom among the orthodox was to shave off the hair of the bride after her marriage and she kept her head covered, either with a kerchief or wore a "Sheitel" (Peruke-Wig).

**DEATH**

As soon as a death occurs, or upon hearing of a death, one says: "Barukh dayan ha'emeth - Blessed is He who judges with justice." The departed one is washed, dressed in his shrouds (Takhrikhim), laid on the floor and covered with a white sheet. Candles are lit about the body. Friends read psalms in the room of the wake. Funerals take place the same day, or the next day at the latest. Burials are in plain open caskets. Palestinian earth is placed under the head, broken crokery over the eyes, and bits of twigs in the hands. In addition, the married male is buried in his kittel and talith. No male belonging to the Kahenic group may enter a home where a dead person lies. All participants in a funeral likewise must wash their hands before they return to their homes.

During the burial, all close kin have their garments "torn," usually an incision is made in a necktie for the men and in a blouse for the women. The first seven days are spent in deep mourning, "Shiv'ah." The mourners sit on low stools and all mirrors are covered. Prayers, attended by at least a "Minyan" (quorum of ten), are recited at the home of the deceased for the first seven days, where direct male relatives recite the "Kadish" in memory of the departed. Sons recite the Kaddish daily during the first eleven months after death. During "Yizkor" (Commemoration) periods of the four major holidays—Yom Kippur, Shemini Atsereth (Sukkoth), Shavu'oth and on the last day of Passover—the dead are remembered with special prayers. Kadish is recited by the sons, or sons-in-law, for the remainder of their lives, on the death anniversaries, called in Yiddish "Yortsayt," and a commemorative candle is lit.

**COHEN-LEVI-ISRAEL**

A division is made among Jews for purposes of reading the Torah portions in the synagogues during the cantillation. The first reading goes to those of the Kahenic (priestly) extraction; the second place goes to the Levitic (sacerdotal); and the remainder of the Jews get the third place, titled, Israel.

The Jews retained these divisions either through oral tradition or surnames, such as Cohen, Kahn, Kun, Kogen, Kaheni, Kaganovitch and other variations, and Katz (the last mentioned is considered the oldest surname of continuous use in existence, having been derived from the initials "Kohen" and "Tsedek" a priest of righteousness), for the Kahenic group. Levy, Halevi, Lewis, Levin, Levinson, Loew, Segal, Siegel and their many variations are surnames for the Levitic group. The Segal variations are derived from contracting the Hebrew words, "Segan Levi," Levitic assistant.

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The above are but a few of the more important customs and rituals.

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For the Holidays and Customs we recommend reading "Life Is With People," by Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog; International Universities Press, Inc., N. Y., 1952.